

Empress Theodora Palaiologina, Wife of Michael VIII

ALICE-MARY TALBOT

Except for her role as the patron of the Lipsunners in Constantinople, the late thirteenth-century empress Theodora Doukaina Palaiologina has received little scholarly attention to date, no doubt because the bits and pieces of information about her life are widely scattered.¹ It is the aim of this study to flesh out the heretofore shadowy figure of the empress, and to present a biographical sketch of Theodora, with particular emphasis on her activity as a patron of monasteries, charitable institutions, and the arts.

I. THEODORA AS THE WIFE OF MICHAEL VIII

Born perhaps ca. 1240, Theodora was a woman of distinguished ancestry, related by blood or marriage to many of the ruling families of Byzantium. In a chrysobull of 1283 she is referred to as Theodora Doukaina Komnene Palaiologina,² and in his funeral oration on the empress Theodore Metochites praises her descent from the Doukas and Komnenos families.³ According to George Akropolites,⁴ she was the daughter of Eudokia Angelina and John Doukas, the son of the sebastokrator Isaac Doukas, brother of John III (Doukas) Vatatzes. Her father died at a young age, leaving Theodora as his only child. In 1253/4, the Nicaean emperor Vatatzes, her great-uncle, who reportedly "loved her like a daughter,"⁵ arranged her mar-

riage to the thirty-year-old Michael Palaiologos, who had already developed a fine military reputation.

After the premature death of Theodore II Laskaris in 1258, Michael Palaiologos, who at that time was *megas konostaulos*, was chosen as the guardian of the child-emperor John IV Laskaris; according to Pachymeres, he was selected on account of his military experience, his noble birth, and the fact that both he and his wife were related to the Laskarids.⁶ While the family was still living in the Empire of Nicaea, Theodora bore two sons—Manuel, born sometime between 1254 and 1257, who died as a young child, and Andronikos, born in 1258—as well as a daughter Irene (born ca. 1260). Sometime after 1 January 1259,⁷ Michael and Theodora were crowned at Nicaea.⁸ Pachymeres does not specifically mention the coronation of Theodora, but the historian contrasts "those who received the crown" (οἱ τὸ στέφος δεξάμενοι), that is, the imperial couple, with the young John IV Laskaris, who had to be content with a band ornamented with pearls and precious stones.

In August 1261, following the recovery of Constantinople from the Latins, Theodora, quite pregnant with her fourth child, joined her husband in his triumphal entry into the capital; they were also accompanied by their son Andronikos and Theodora's mother.⁹ After the reinstatement of Arsений as patriarch, Michael was crowned a second time at Hagia Sophia, probably in the early fall of 1261. D. Geanakoplos assumes that Theodora also received a second coronation, but this is not ex-

¹This study has been facilitated by the assembly of much of the relevant bibliography in *PLP* 9 (Vienna, 1989), no. 21380.

²S. Pétridès, "Chrysobulle de l'impératrice Théodora (1283)," *EO* 14 (1911), 26.

³Theodore Metochites, *Μονωδία ἐπὶ τῇ βασιλίδι Θεοδώρα τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως μητρὶ*, unpublished oration in *Vind. phil. gr.* 95, fol. 187r (hereafter Metochites, *Monodia*): *πρόγονοι μὲν σοι βασιλεῖς ἐκείνοι Δοῦκαι τε καὶ Κομνηνοί, τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ περὶ ἅπαντα βασιλέων ὀνόματα*.

⁴*Georgii Acropolitae Opera*, ed. A. Heisenberg, vol. I (Leipzig, 1903), 101.6–14.

⁵H. Grégoire, "Imperatoris Michaelis Palaeologi de Vita sua," *Byzantion* 29–30 (1959–60), 451.

⁶*Georges Pachymères. Relations historiques*, ed. A. Failler, trans. V. Laurent, vol. I (Paris, 1984), 95.23–26 (hereafter Pachymeres, ed. Failler); cf. A. Failler, "Pachymeriana quaedam," *REB* 40 (1982), 187–91.

⁷P. Wirth, "Die Begründung der Kaisermacht Michaels VIII. Palaiologos," *JÖB* 10 (1961), 87–89, 91.

⁸Pachymeres, ed. Failler, I, 145–47.

⁹Pachymeres, ed. Failler, I, 217.2–7.

pressly stated by Pachymeres.¹⁰ The empress gave birth to Constantine the Porphyrogennetos sometime during the fall of 1261.

About the same time Theodora had to confront a crisis in her marriage. According to Pachymeres, Michael became enamored of Anna-Constance of Hohenstaufen, the sister of Manfred of Sicily, who was briefly married to John Vatatzes before his death. The emperor reportedly first tried to persuade Anna to become his mistress; when she refused, he offered to divorce Theodora in order to marry her. When Theodora heard the news, she sought the assistance of Patriarch Arsenios, who threatened the emperor with the wrath of God if he carried out his plans.¹¹ Michael yielded to patriarchal pressure and permitted Anna to leave for home in December 1261. The emperor's motivation in this affair is unclear: he may have been interested in forming an alliance with Manfred,¹² or perhaps hoped that a marriage to the widow of John Vatatzes would make him more acceptable to supporters of the Laskarid dynasty.

The imperial couple was reconciled and had another son, Theodore, born ca. 1263. In addition to Irene, they had two more daughters whose birth dates are less well established, Anna and Eudokia. Michael also fathered two illegitimate daughters, both of whom were married to Mongol rulers. Maria, whose mother was a certain Diplovatatzina, was first engaged to marry Hulagu, but after his death in 1265 she married Abaga.¹³ In order to be of marriageable age in 1265, it is likely that she was born before 1253/4, the date of Michael's marriage to Theodora. The birth date of Euphrosyne, who married Nogay in 1269 or 1270, is unknown.¹⁴

Little is recorded of the political role of Theodora during her husband's reign (1259–82). In 1269 she took an active interest in the negotiations to marry their daughter Anna to Stefan Milutin, the son of Stefan Uroš I of Serbia; the empress, concerned for her daughter's well-being, gave the

chartophylax Bekkos specific instructions to investigate living conditions in Serbia.¹⁵ After the projected marriage alliance with Serbia fell through, Anna was married in 1278 to Demetrios-Michael Koutroules, a son of Michael II Komnenos Doukas of Epiros; she died before 1301.¹⁶ In 1279 Michael sought his wife's advice with regard to the marriage of their daughter Irene to John III Asen of Bulgaria.¹⁷

Theodora also used her arts of persuasion to gain clemency for courtiers who fell into disfavor. Thus in 1280 she intervened in the cause of a certain Kaloeidas who was in charge of her treasury and had been accused of slandering the emperor. As a result of Theodora's pleas, Kaloeidas escaped execution, but was blinded and had his nose cut off.¹⁸ On another occasion she sought mercy for her cousin, Michael Strategopoulos, who had fallen under suspicion of treachery, and saved him from blinding.¹⁹

From the time that they were crowned emperor and empress, Michael and Theodora took a special interest in the welfare of monastic communities. A number of documents survive from the archives of the Patmos and Lembiotissa monasteries, dating between 1259 and 1281 and attesting to active imperial intervention in disputes over monastic properties or privileges, especially in the region of the Dodecanese and Smyrna. Several of these acts are *horismoi* (preserved only in copies) issued by the empress herself; the originals bore her seal in wax, while one of the copies has a lead seal.²⁰ From these acts we learn that Theodora had been granted the island of Kos as her private property and had placed it under the control of her treasury (*vestiariou*).²¹ She was particularly devoted to the monastery of St. John the Theologian on Patmos, issuing *horismoi* between 1259 and 1263 in confirmation of its possession of the metochion of Anabasedion on Kos and in 1269 a *horismos* confirm-

¹⁰ Pachymeres, ed. Failler, I, 233; cf. D. Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West, 1258–1282* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 121 (hereafter Geanakoplos, *Michael*). On the date of Michael's second coronation, see R. Macrides, "The New Constantine and the New Constantinople—1261?," *BMGS* 6 (1980), 14, note 6.

¹¹ Pachymeres, ed. Failler, I, 245–49; *Les registres des actes du patriarchat de Constantinople, Vol. I. Fasc. IV. Les registres de 1208 à 1309* (hereafter *RegPatr*), ed. V. Laurent (Paris, 1971), no. 1363 (to be dated to late 1261 rather than to 1262 as in *RegPatr*; cf. Pachymeres, ed. Failler, I, 246 note 3).

¹² Cf. Geanakoplos, *Michael*, 145.

¹³ Pachymeres, ed. Failler, I, 235; cf. *PLP* 9, no. 21395.

¹⁴ Pachymeres, ed. Failler, I, 243; cf. *PLP*, Add. 1–8 (Vienna, 1988), no. 91916.

¹⁵ Pachymeres, ed. Failler, II, 453; cf. A. Failler, "Le projet de mariage d'Anna Palaiologina avec Milutin de Serbie," *RSBS* 1 (1981), 239–49.

¹⁶ Pachymeres, ed. Failler, II, 559–61; *PLP* 9, no. 21350.

¹⁷ Pachymeres, ed. Failler, II, 557–59. Irene bore ten children, and lived long enough to become a grandmother. She is last mentioned in 1307, and had definitely died by 1328; *PLP* 9, no. 21359.

¹⁸ Pachymeres, ed. Failler, II, 621.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 615–17.

²⁰ These documents were the subject of a special study by F. Barišić, "Povelje vizantijskih carica," *ZRVI* 13 (1971), 143–93, with French summary, 194–202. See also *Byzantina engrapha tes Mones Patmou* (hereafter *Patmou engrapha*), ed. E. Vranoussi and M. Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, I, (Athens, 1980), 287 f.

²¹ *Patmou engrapha*, II, 190, 203.

ing the exemptions (*exkousseiai*) granted to four of the monastery's ships. A probable copy of the latter document is preserved on Patmos, complete with a lead seal bearing on one side the image of the enthroned Virgin with the Christ Child on her knees, on the other the standing figure of the empress holding a scepter in her left hand.²² Documents of Theodora's fiscal agents provide the information that sometime after 1259 she gave the monastery of the Savior on Kos to the Patmos monastery as a metochion.²³ The metochion of the Savior, formerly a stavropegion of the bishop of Kos, had been abandoned because of attacks by pirates and brigands, and the empress hoped that its fortunes would revive under the supervision of Abbot Germanos of the Patmos monastery. In 1271 she again intervened to recover for the metochion some olive and oak trees that had been appropriated by the bishopric of Kos when the monastery was given to Patmos.²⁴

In 1262 Theodora responded to the request of Gerasimos, abbot of the Lembiotissa monastery near Smyrna, and issued a horismos confirming all its rights, privileges, and immunities.²⁵ In 1270 or 1285 John Komes, acting on her orders, gave the monastery a piece of property called Hagia.²⁶

The surviving documents issued by Theodora and her agents, as well as the allusions in them to numerous other (now lost) acts issued by the empress, demonstrate her generosity toward and concern for religious establishments. Even more striking is the fact that her acts sometimes confirm those of the emperor, and sometimes address orders to his officials. As a result, Barišić has described Theodora as an empress "sharing in the imperial power, with the prerogatives of a type of co-regent."²⁷ He also concludes that the acts issued by Theodora became the standard model for those subsequently issued by later empresses: the latter acts are always called horismoi, they bear the wax seal of the empress, and the *menologema* (dating formula) is written in black ink.²⁸ A further indication of the scope of her administrative activity is that more of her seals are preserved than of any

other Byzantine empress, although several specimens are forged copies.²⁹

When Michael VIII decided to accept a policy of church union at the time of the Council of Lyons in 1274, there is evidence that Theodora originally sympathized with the anti-unionists. Nikephoros Gregoras' vita of his uncle John of Herakleia tells us that her spiritual confessor was a monk named John who was exiled by Michael in 1275 for his opposition to union.³⁰ Theodora was evidently powerless to persuade her husband to change his mind, and must have at least feigned a willingness to accept the unification of the churches of Rome and Constantinople, since she was later forced to recant, as we shall see below. We do not know, however, if she came to support the Union sincerely; certainly many members of the imperial family opposed Michael on this issue, even his own sister Eulogia. The Raoul brothers, Manuel and Isaac, who were imprisoned and blinded for their obstinate opposition, were relatives of both Theodora and her husband.

Michael embarked on a program of persecution of those who opposed his religious policy, especially monks, and became extremely unpopular among his subjects. Thus few tears were shed at the time of his death in 1282. In the fall of that year, when Michael set out on his final campaign in Thrace, the empress, who was concerned about his health, strongly urged him to remain in the capital³¹ but failed to dissuade him. He died of an intestinal malady near Rhaidestos on 11 December. Denied funeral rites by the Orthodox Church because of his unionist position, his body was laid to rest in a church in Selymbria.

II. THEODORA AS DOWAGER EMPRESS (1282–1303)

The Rejection of the Union of Lyons

Immediately following the death of Michael, his son Andronikos II began the process of reversing the decisions made at Lyons. At this juncture Theodora (finding herself in a situation parallel to that of her homonym, the wife of the iconoclastic

²² F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana* (hereafter MM), VI (Vienna, 1890), 204 f, 225 f; *Patmou engrapha*, I, nos. 31, 32, 36.

²³ *Patmou engrapha*, II, nos. 68, 69.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, II, no. 70.

²⁵ MM, IV, 260 f.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 175 f. On the date see Barišić, "Povelje vizantijskih carica," 156 note 38.

²⁷ Barišić, *ibid.*, 196.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

²⁹ V. Laurent, *Les sceaux byzantins du Médailler Vatican* (Vatican City, 1962), 12. For a published example of her seals, see G. Zacos and A. Vegliery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, I (Basel, 1972), no. 122.

³⁰ V. Laurent, "La vie de Jean, métropolitte d'Héraclée du Pont," *Ἀρχ. Πόντ.* 6 (1935), 41.4–7, 45.22–46.1. John of Herakleia, who as a youth was a favorite of the empress and a disciple of her spiritual confessor, was also forced to leave the court.

³¹ Pachymeres, ed. Failler, II, 659–61.

emperor Theophilos, in 843) seems to have been torn between her loyalty to the memory of her husband and her concern for the salvation of his soul, and her desire to return to Orthodoxy. Michael's sister Eulogia greatly distressed the recently bereaved empress by stating that Michael was doomed to eternal damnation.³²

In 1283, at the first council of Blachernai, Theodora was required to recant her previous allegiance to Rome, make a profession of Orthodox faith, and acknowledge that she accepted the decision that her husband could never receive Christian burial.³³ This confession of faith, which survives in numerous copies, was in the form of a chrysobull that the empress verified by marking a cross (διὰ οἰκιοχείρου σταυροῦ) at the beginning of the document. A manuscript in Madrid notes that the document had a gold seal with an image of the Virgin and Child on one side and the empress on the other.³⁴ She acknowledged her past errors, excusing herself by stating that she did not fully comprehend the gravity of the matter and the potential harm to Christian souls, although she admitted to having had grave doubts at the time. In return her name was restored to the diptychs and she was again commemorated in the liturgy.³⁵

Despite her apparent lapse of faith in 1274, Theodora is treated with respect and even praise by contemporary and later authors. A fifteenth-century source, John Eugenikos, referring to Theodora as *hagia*, suggests that Andronikos was strongly encouraged in his religious policy by his mother.³⁶ We shall never know for sure her attitude toward the Union of Lyons, but, as will be discussed below, her words and deeds in later years suggest that she was sincerely repentant and rejected her husband's views.

The Episode of the Relics of St. Michael of Chalcedon

In addition to her brief flirtation with Unionist policy, the only other "scandal" in Theodora's life

was a little-known instance of sacrilege, which can perhaps be excused as motivated by an excess of piety. Theodora reportedly developed a strong attachment to an obscure Iconodule saint, Michael of Chalcedon, whose relics were preserved at an otherwise unattested church of St. Constantine in Chalcedon. Desiring to possess a fragment of these relics, the empress sent a retainer to the church. After bribing one of the priests "with much gold," he gained access to the sarcophagus where the saint lay. But when he tried to cut off Michael's hand, the saint not only stopped him, but shriveled up the offender's hand.³⁷

Theodora's Relations with Andronikos II

Theodora seems to have been on good terms with her eldest surviving son, Andronikos II. They evidently agreed on reversing Michael's policy of church union, and she speaks warmly of him in the typikon for the Lips nunnery. In turn Andronikos grieved greatly at his mother's death and provided lavish funeral rites for her. Nevertheless, Theodora did not always have her way with her son, as can be seen in two episodes involving her other surviving sons. Thus Pachymeres states that, unlike his brother Constantine, Theodore was not successful in acquiring the title of despotes despite the entreaties of his mother.³⁸ Second, when her son Constantine the Porphyrogennetos was accused of treachery at Nymphaion in 1293 and kept under house arrest by Andronikos, Theodora failed to secure his freedom. In fact, Gregoras relates that when Andronikos went to Thessaloniki in 1299 to escort his daughter Simonis to her marriage with Stefan Uroš II Milutin of Serbia, he took along his brother Constantine to ensure that Theodora did not take advantage of the emperor's absence from the capital to arrange Constantine's release.³⁹

The Monastic Foundations of Theodora

Sometime after the death of Michael VIII, Theodora restored the Lips monastery (Fenari Isa Camii), which had been originally founded in the tenth century, and established there a nunnery dedicated to the Theotokos. In reconstructing the convent she added a second church, of St. John the

³² Georgii Pachymeris *De Michaelē et Andronico Paleologis libri tredecim*, Bonn ed. (1835), II, 16.6–11 (hereafter Pachymeres, Bonn ed.).

³³ Pachymeres, Bonn ed., II, 55.5–10; cf. D. Nicol, "The Byzantine Reaction to the Second Council of Lyons, 1274," *Studies in Church History* 7 (1971), 140 f.

³⁴ L. Petit, "La profession de foi de l'impératrice Théodora," *EO* 18 (1916–19), 287. This is apparently the only chrysobull known to have been issued by an empress. The fact that Theodora marked the sign of the cross but did not append her signature suggests that she may not have known how to sign her name.

³⁵ Pétrides, "Chrysobulle," 25–28; Petit, "L'impératrice," 286 f.

³⁶ S. Lampros, *Palaiologeia kai Peloponnesiaka*, I (Athens, 1912), 130.4–9.

³⁷ F. Halkin, "Saint Michel de Chalcedoine," *REB* 19 (1961), 163, chap. 6; cf. R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris, 1975), 60.

³⁸ Pachymeres, Bonn ed., II, 181.14–18.

³⁹ Nicephori Gregorae *Byzantina historia*, Bonn ed. (1829), I, 203.19–24 (hereafter Greg.). Cf. also F. Barišić, "Konstantin Porfirogenit Paleolog," *ZRVI* 22 (1983), 43–58.

Baptist, adjoining the south side of the tenth-century church of the Theotokos. A twelve-bed hospital for the treatment of laywomen was also included in the complex. We are unusually well informed about this nunnery, since it is one of the relatively few Byzantine monasteries for which both the church and the typikon survive.⁴⁰

The typikon was written subsequent to the completion of the restoration, certainly after December 1282, since Theodora states that her husband is deceased and has been succeeded by her son Andronikos, and before February 1303, when Theodora died. There are other clues that enable us to date the typikon even more precisely. First of all, Theodora refers in the document to Michael IX Palaiologos, and describes him as “ruling together with Andronikos,” as her “ornament and consolation,” and as the “heir to his (Andronikos’) power and crown.”⁴¹ This suggests a date after 21 May 1294, when Michael IX was crowned co-emperor and received the title of autokrator; an earlier date is not completely ruled out, however, since Michael was named co-emperor in 1281 while still a child. Second, Theodora states that she had prepared a tomb at Lips for one of her daughters who had already died. This must have been Anna, who died sometime before 1301, since Irene is known to have survived her mother, while Eudokia died in December 1302 in Trebizond and was surely buried there. It is therefore probable that the typikon was written sometime between 1294 and 1301. If we assume that the typikon was composed shortly after the completion of the repairs and new construction, then we should conclude that the convent was restored during the last decade of the thirteenth century.

The cenobitic convent of Lips was intended to house fifty nuns, of whom thirty were to be choir

sisters, the others responsible for housekeeping duties. It was to be fully independent, but under the protection of the emperor. The convent was served by four priests, two assigned to each church. Nuns held such positions as skeuophylakissa (sacristan), ekklesiarchissa, and docheiaria (treasurer), but the steward was to be a layman who received a salary for his services.

Theodora had various motivations for establishing the convent of Lips. She was impelled by piety to found a monastery where noble women desirous of taking monastic vows could find a haven of tranquillity and pray for the salvation of their own souls and that of their fellow Christians. She foresaw the possibility that her own daughters and granddaughters might gradually retire there. The convent was also a charitable institution in that it made regular distributions of food to the poor and included a hospital for the care of sick women. Last but not least, the church of St. John the Baptist was consciously designed as a mausoleum for the Palaiologan family, most probably in imitation of the church of St. Michael at the Pantokrator monastery, which had been built in the mid-twelfth century by John II Komnenos to house the tombs of his family. The first member of the Palaiologan dynasty, Michael VIII, had been denied Christian burial; Theodora, as dowager empress and matriarch of the family, no doubt was determined to make provision for proper burial for herself and her descendants. Thus the typikon specifies the location in the new church of her own tomb, that of her mother and daughter, and a place for her son Andronikos if he chose to be buried there.⁴² She also anticipated that her children and grandchildren and their spouses would find their final resting place at the Lips monastery and would be commemorated annually by the nuns.⁴³ In his monody on the death of Empress Theodora, Theodore Metochites notes that she prepared her tomb several years before her death, commissioning the manufacture of μνήματα, περιτάφιοι στέγαι, ἐπιπλα κατατύμβια, and δεήσεις ἐν γράμμασι, terms which should probably be translated as a “covered tomb” (i.e., arcosolium?) with “funerary furnishings” and “written petitions” (probably a reference to an epitaph).⁴⁴

The interior of the church of John the Baptist

⁴⁰The church is described in a series of articles in *DOP* 18 (1964), 249–315: T. Macridy, “The Monastery of Lips (Fenari Isa Camii) at Istanbul”; A. H. S. Megaw, “The Original Form of the Theotokos Church of Constantine Lips”; and C. Mango and E. J. W. Hawkins, “Additional Notes.” The typikon was published by H. Delehaye, *Deux typica byzantins de l’époque des Paléologues* (Brussels, 1921), 14–16, 106–36, 172–85 (hereafter Delehaye, *Deux typica*). The typikon was not actually written by Theodora herself but was drafted by a “ghostwriter,” as we learn from the verses he wrote in the margin of an 11th-century ms. of ps.-Dionysios the Areopagite, Vat. gr. 1787, fol. 4v: τυπογραφίας προσαγγή βασιλίδος/τῆς Δουκοφνοῦς εὐσεβοῦς Θεοδώρας/καὶ ταῖς μοναχαῖς ὡς χρῶν ζῆν θεσπίσας . . . ; cf. P. Canart, *Codices Vaticani graeci 1745–1962*, I (Vatican City, 1970), 135. The anonymous writer presented the codex to the Lips convent as a gift. The Theodora to whom he alludes must be the dowager empress, rather than Theodora Synadene, the foundress of the convent of the Theotokos tes Bebaia Elpidos, because she is called *basilis*.

⁴¹Delehaye, *Deux typica*, 108.18–21.

⁴²Indeed Andronikos was buried at the Lips convent after his death in 1332 (Greg. I, 463), as was Constantine in 1306 (Pachymeres, Bonn ed., II, 425.4–8).

⁴³Delehaye, *Deux typica*, 130.

⁴⁴Metochites, *Monodia*, fol. 184v. C. Mango (*DOP* 18 [1964], 301) suggests that the “written petitions” may be a reference to the typikon, but since they are so closely connected with the

underwent numerous alterations during the period of Turkish occupation, as well as being damaged by fire, with the result that today it is difficult to identify Theodora's tomb with certainty. C. Mango argues that it is the arcosolium tomb located in the east niche of the south aisle.⁴⁵ The back wall of the niche was originally covered with mosaic, but most of the tesserae have fallen. It is still possible to make out part of a standing female figure, her arms folded over her chest.⁴⁶ The image was flanked by two columns of an inscription, at least thirteen lines in length, but now indecipherable.⁴⁷ It is possible, however, that Theodora's tomb was actually the one in the west niche of the south aisle, where traces of a figure and inscription are also preserved in the setting bed on the back wall. Mango deciphered the phrase . . . νύα μοναχή, suggested the reconstruction Ἀντωνία μοναχή or Εὐγενία μοναχή, "the nun Antonia" or "the nun Eugenia," and identified the tomb as that of Theodora's daughter Anna. It is now known, however, that Theodora's monastic name was Eugenia,⁴⁸ so she may have been buried in this niche instead of that to the east. Mango and Hawkins have suggested that fragments of a sarcophagus

found at Fenari Isa Camii may be the remains of the tomb of Theodora, but this hypothesis must be rejected since the woman commemorated in the inscription bore the monastic name of Theodosia.⁴⁹

Attached to the typikon for the Lips nunnery as a sort of appendix is a brief rule for the Constantinopolitan convent of the Hagioi Anargyroi, or Sts. Kosmas and Damian, for whose restoration Theodora was also responsible.⁵⁰ She notes that this nunnery was in a state of ruin as a result of the Latin conquest of 1204 and had lost the properties originally donated to it by a certain logothetes tou dromou. Theodora not only reconstructed its buildings, but had a circuit wall built around the complex for security, and gave the nunnery "treasures" (i.e., sacred vessels?) and sufficient estates to sustain it.⁵¹ The rule drafted by Theodora is not designed to be a complete set of regulations for the Anargyroi nunnery, but rather a supplement to the original typikon, including a listing of donated properties. She states clearly that she undertook the commitment to revive the Anargyroi convent after she had founded the nunnery at Lips; thus its reconstruction must date to the very end of the thirteenth century. The convent of Kosmas and Damian was to be independent, and the nuns were to follow a way of life similar to that at Lips. It was smaller, housing only thirty nuns (eighteen of them choir sisters), and it was served by only two priests. It was to celebrate feast days less lavishly than the Lips nunnery, which was distinguished as the mausoleum of the Palaiologoi and a place visited by the emperor and high court officials. Theodora did leave instructions, however, that commemorative services for deceased members of the Palaiologan family were to be held at Anargyroi as well, but on a lesser scale than at Lips. She envisaged the two convents as sister (but unequal) establishments, whose superiors and stewards would consult with each other on a frequent basis.

Theodora may also have restored the church at

description of her tomb furniture, it seems much more probable that the term means an epitaph.

⁴⁵ C. Mango and E. J. W. Hawkins, "Additional Notes," *DOP* 18 (1964), 302.

⁴⁶ In addition to Theodora's image on seals, her only surviving portrait is a badly damaged fresco in the exonarthex of a church at Apollonia in Albania, where she is accompanied by Michael, Andronikos, and the Virgin (H. and H. Buschhausen, *Die Marienkirche von Apollonia in Albanien* [Vienna, 1976], 17, 143–82, fig. 19, pls. XXI–XXII). In the 17th century C. DuCange (*Familiae augustae byzantinae* [Paris, 1680], 233, reproduced in his *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, X [Niort, 1877], pl. VI) published an engraving of a picture of Theodora and Michael flanking their son Constantine (it is noteworthy that he is depicted instead of Andronikos), which may be the mosaic portrait that Clavijo saw at the Peribleptos Church in the early 15th century (C. Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire* [Toronto-Buffalo-London, 1986], 217 and note 164).

⁴⁷ The mosaic panel may have been similar in format and content to the fragmentary funerary inscription in marble found in Istanbul in 1917, and now housed in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. W. H. Buckler ("The Monument of a Palaiologina," in *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger*, II [Paris, 1924], 521–26) has reconstructed this memorial slab as a block 0.74 m square, which was set vertically into a wall. It contained the relief image of a female figure with a 14-verse epitaph in two columns, one on each side of her. The poem, written in the first person, was the prayer of a nun named Maria, the sebasto daughter of a Palaiologos, to be accepted by Christ as his bride and to be allowed to enter the heavenly bridal chamber. Buckler dates the monument between 1275 and 1325 on the basis of its letter forms. Macridy assumes that the slab came from the south church of the Lips monastery (*DOP* 18 [1964], 271).

⁴⁸ J. Gouillard, "Le Synodikon de l'Orthodoxie," *TM* 2 (1967), 101.864.

⁴⁹ C. Mango and E. J. W. Hawkins, "Additional Finds at Fenari Isa Camii, Istanbul," *DOP* 22 (1968), 181.

⁵⁰ The rule is edited in Delehaye, *Deux typica*, 136–40. See also R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin. I. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique, 3. Les églises et les monastères* (Paris, 1969), 285 f. B. Aran proposed that the Atik Mustafa Camii in the Blachernai region should be identified with the church of the Anargyroi convent ("The Nunnery of the Anargyres and the Atik Mustafa Pasha Mosque," *JÖB* 26 [1977], 247–53), an identification rejected by T. Mathews and E. J. W. Hawkins ("Notes on the Atik Mustafa Paşa Camii in Istanbul," *DOP* 39 [1985], 134).

⁵¹ Delehaye, *Deux typica*, 136 f.

the convent of the Theotokos ta Mikra Romaïou where the relics of St. Thomais were preserved. In his enkomion of Thomais, Constantine Akropolites, who served Andronikos II from 1294 to 1321, as logothetes tou genikou and as megas logothetes, prayed to the saint to bless "the pious and Christ-loving empress (*anassa*) who out of love for God restored this church and many others which were ruined and who built others from the foundations. . . ."⁵² It seems most likely that the *anassa* should be identified with the dowager empress Theodora Palaiologina, since she is known to have been the ktētōr of the nunneries of Lips and the Anargyroi, and is also praised by Theodore Metochites as the founder of churches and monasteries.⁵³ Another possible candidate for the *anassa*, Andronikos' second wife, Irene-Yolanda of Montferrat, is not recorded as having shown any interest in the patronage of monasteries.

Properties Donated by Theodora to the Lips Convent

The typikon for the Lips convent includes a list of the properties that Theodora donated to her newly restored foundation to support the nuns and for the maintenance of the monastic complex and the hospital. The inventory suggests the enormous wealth Theodora had at her disposal as the only child of an aristocratic couple and as a dowager empress. Theodora records that she acquired her property in various ways: some land was "ancestral" and inherited, some was given her by her son Andronikos, some was purchased. It should be noted that none of the donated property had been given to her by Michael. Theodora's donations were estates in the regions of Pergamum, Smyrna, and Lopadion (including mills, vineyards, gardens, and a fish hatchery); a village called Nymphai near Constantinople; a village called Skoteion in Macedonia; and houses and workshops in the capital. Theodora's mother, Eudokia Angelina, also made substantial contributions of immovable property to the convent.⁵⁴

⁵² *ActaSS* Nov. 4 (Brussels, 1925), 246F. See also A. M. Talbot, "Old Wine in New Bottles: The Rewriting of Saints' Lives in the Palaiologan Period," in *The Twilight of Byzantium* (Princeton, 1991), 15–26.

⁵³ Metochites, *Monodia*, fol. 184v: καὶ τί ἄλλο ἦν σοι τὸ τελευταῖον τῶν χρόνων σπουδασμα ἢ τῶν ἱερῶν σοι τῶνδε καὶ πανσέπτων οἰκῶν καὶ μονῶν φιλοκαλία πάσα; A contemporary source, Pachymeres (Bonn ed., II, 378.1), also refers to Theodora as *anassa*.

⁵⁴ Delehay, *Deux typica*, 131–33; cf. also G. Weiss, "Vermögensbildung der Byzantiner in Privathand: Methodische Fragen einer Quantitativen Analyse," *Byzantina* 11 (1982), 90.

Manuscripts Commissioned by Theodora

In addition to her sponsorship of the construction or restoration of churches and monasteries, there are some indications that Theodora took an interest in promoting scholarship and in soliciting the production of manuscripts. In 1265/6, for example, soon after the recovery of Constantinople, she commissioned the monk Arsenios to translate into Greek a work on geometry by the Persian philosopher al-Zanātī. The tract is preserved in Naples (II C 33) with a note providing the information about Arsenios and Theodora.⁵⁵

In his monody on the dowager empress Theodora, in the same sentence in which he praises her construction of churches and monasteries, Theodore Metochites alludes to her "careful ornamentation of holy scriptures and books" and "of vessels and cups perfect in their purity."⁵⁶ The manuscripts and vessels are so closely linked in the text with the monasteries and churches that it seems logical to assume that Metochites was referring to liturgical vessels and books specially made for the new religious establishments that she founded.

The only surviving codex that can be linked to Theodora with certainty is British Library Add. 22748, which contains the typikon for the Lips nunnery with the attached rule for the convent of Kosmas and Damian. Unfortunately, the manuscript, dated to the fourteenth century by Delehay, has been mutilated by the removal of many of the decorative headpieces at the beginning of chapters, and its folios are badly jumbled, but it is still clear that this was a deluxe codex, probably the original version of the typikon. The parchment folios, measuring 26 × 19.5 cm, contain only nine or ten lines of writing on each page, so that the individual letters are very large, and there are only three to five words in each line. The titles of chapters and chapter numbers are in gold, while the illuminated initials are in gold, blue, red, and green, with white highlights. The more elaborate headpieces have been cut out (resulting in the loss of text on the other side of the page), but one example of pseudo-Kufic ornament is preserved on fol. 70r, as well as a number of simple headbands

⁵⁵ G. Pierleoni, *Catalogus codicum graecorum Bibliothecae Nationalis Neapolitanae*, I (Rome, 1962), 284; see also P. Kunitzsch, "Die 'Unwettersterne' und die 'Geomantie' des Zanātī," *BZ* 60 (1967), 309–17.

⁵⁶ Metochites, *Monodia*, fol. 184v: καὶ ἱερῶν λογίων καὶ βιβλῶν ἐπιμελὴς περικόσμησις καὶ θησαυρίσματα καὶ τῶν πανάγων σκευῶν τε καὶ ἐκπομάτων. . . .

composed of alternating diamonds and circles with terminal leaf tendrils.⁵⁷

The dowager empress Theodora may also have commissioned the production of several deluxe biblical and liturgical manuscripts of the late thirteenth century. In the 1970s Hugo Buchthal and Hans Belting studied a group of fifteen illuminated service books and assigned them to the "atelier of the Palaiologina" on the basis of a monogram found in one of the manuscripts.⁵⁸ The group includes three large lectionaries "intended for service in Constantinople itself, and clearly for use in major churches or monasteries."⁵⁹ Buchthal and Belting proposed that the most likely candidate for the "Palaiologina" was Theodora Raoulaina, a niece of Michael VIII, a known bibliophile and the *ktētor* of the nunnery of St. Andrew in Krisei.⁶⁰ Raoulaina died in 1300 and thus fits the time frame of the late thirteenth century to which the authors assign the group of codices. Although Buchthal and Belting concluded that "certainly no other member of the imperial family has an equal claim to our consideration,"⁶¹ I submit that the dowager empress Theodora should also be viewed as a candidate for the mysterious "Palaiologina."⁶² As an empress married to the first emperor of the Palaiologan dynasty, she was entitled to use the monogram Palaiologina; she had substantial wealth at her disposal; on the evidence of Metochites' monody, she commissioned manuscripts for use in monasteries; she was a contemporary of Raoulaina, as her death in 1303 attests; her founda-

tion of the Lips convent in the 1290s accords perfectly with the dates (1285–1300) posited by Buchthal and Belting for the production of the group of deluxe manuscripts. Furthermore, Nelson and Lowden have pointed out similarities between the initial letters and decorative strips of the Lips typikon and those to be found in manuscripts of the atelier, including the use of pseudo-Kufic ornament.⁶³ The script of the Lips typikon differs markedly from that of the manuscripts of the "atelier," but this is not surprising since the typikon was a legal document rather than a liturgical book. It is quite conceivable that the empress patronized different workshops when she commissioned the production of different kinds of manuscripts. It should also be noted that Nelson and Lowden argue that more than one patron commissioned the manuscripts produced by the "atelier."⁶⁴

The Death and Funeral of Theodora

In 1303 Theodora fell ill and died on 25 February.⁶⁵ Her son Andronikos arranged magnificent funeral rites, and she was laid to rest in the newly constructed church of John the Baptist, where she had prepared her tomb some years earlier. The funeral oration was delivered by Theodore Metochites, who at that time was *logothetes ton oikeiakon*. The text of his oration, entitled *Monody on the Empress Theodora, the Mother of the Emperor*, is preserved in Vindo. phil. gr. 95, fols. 179r–189r, but has never been published.⁶⁶ The monody, couched for the most part in generalities of praise of the deceased empress and lamentation at her death, contains little concrete information. Most of the important passages, regarding Theodora's foundation of monasteries and preparation of her tomb at the Lips convent, have already been mentioned above. Metochites does allude to the fact that she took the monastic habit before her death.⁶⁷ The logothete's description of her funeral corroborates the evidence of Pachymeres: the rites were made resplendent with hymns, incense, and

⁵⁷ This manuscript, listed in the *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years MDCCCLIV–MDCCCLX* (London, 1875), 727, has never been properly catalogued. Hence for its description I have had to rely on inspection of a microfilm, supplemented by Delehay's brief description (*Deux typica*, 14), and cursory notes made when I saw the manuscript in London in 1983. After submitting this article, I discovered that Robert Nelson and John Lowden had written an article entitled "The Palaeologina Group: Additional Manuscripts and New Questions," *DOP* 45 (1991), 59–68. It includes a more detailed description of the typikon's script (which they identify as a variant of the *Fettaugen-Mode* and link with the imperial chancellery), initials, and ornamental decoration.

⁵⁸ H. Buchthal and H. Belting, *Patronage in Thirteenth-Century Constantinople: An Atelier of Late Byzantine Book Illumination and Calligraphy* (Washington, D.C., 1978) (hereafter Buchthal and Belting), reviewed by G. Vikan in *ArtB* 63 (1981), 325–28.

⁵⁹ Buchthal and Belting, 9. Since the publication of their book, scholars have assigned a number of additional manuscripts, including more lectionaries, to the group; for details, see Nelson and Lowden, "The Palaeologina Group."

⁶⁰ Buchthal and Belting, 100 f.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶² The same conclusion was reached independently by the present author and by Nelson and Lowden, "The Palaeologina Group."

⁶³ Nelson and Lowden, "The Palaeologina Group," 65–66.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 67–68.

⁶⁵ This date for her death was recently established by A. Failler, "Chronologie et composition dans l'*Histoire de Pachymères*," *REB* 48 (1990), 51 note 177.

⁶⁶ I have been unable to locate a copy of A. Sideras, *Die byzantinische Grabreden* (Göttingen, 1982), where the oration is discussed on pp. 378–81. I am indebted to Ihor Ševčenko for lending me a microfilm of the Vienna manuscript.

⁶⁷ Metochites, *Monodia*, fol. 184v: καὶ τὸ θεῖον μεταμφιάσασθαι τῆς οὐρανίου πολιτείας ἐνδυμα. . . . We know from the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy* that her monastic name was Eugenia; cf. note 48 above.

torches; the funeral was attended by high officials, clergy, and monks; the coffin was carried through muddy streets in a sleet storm to the Lips convent, where the funerary ceremonies lasted for days.⁶⁸

III. CONCLUSION

Theodora's career can be divided into two phases: (1) the thirty-year period of her marriage to Michael VIII, during which she was a dutiful wife, produced seven children, took an interest in the marriage alliances of her sons and daughters, occasionally intervened with her husband to seek clemency for a favorite, and oversaw the administration of her estates; and (2) the twenty years of her widowhood, during which she attempted to distance herself from her late husband. She abjured her earlier acceptance of the Union of Lyons, devoted herself to good works, especially the construction of monasteries, and gave away much of her property to support charitable causes. There are some indications in the sources that her works of piety and charity were intended to atone for her sin of accepting the Union of Lyons in 1274, and that she was sincerely repentant for acceding to the religious policy of Michael. Thus

in the Lips typikon, the almost total omission of any reference to Michael is striking. He is conspicuously absent from the list of those members of the Palaiologan family to be commemorated on the anniversary of their death, and of course no provision was made for his tomb in the mausoleum church of St. John the Baptist since he was denied Christian burial. In her one allusion to Michael, Theodora referred to him not as her husband but as the father of Andronikos, and made the extraordinary statement that during the joint rule of father and son she prayed for the time when Andronikos would be the sole emperor.⁶⁹ In the peroration to the typikon, Theodora declared that she had dedicated some of her property to the convent "in expiation of my sins in this life."⁷⁰ Although this might normally be viewed as a mere commonplace, in light of Theodora's history one suspects that it may have been a sincere expression of her hope that through good works she might attain salvation in the hereafter, despite the fact that she was tainted by her marriage to Michael and by her brief acceptance of the Catholic faith.

Cleveland Heights, Ohio

⁶⁸ Pachymeres, Bonn ed., II, 377 f. Metochites, *Monodia*, esp. fols. 185r-186r.

⁶⁹ Delehaye, *Deux typica*, 108.14-18.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.4-7.